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# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### THE NEW YEAR

This new year of 1915 will be epoch-making in the history of nursing. Never before, since Florence Nightingale went to the Crimea, have nurses been so in the lime-light as they are in consequence of this great European conflict. If the nurses of all the nations concerned and especially those of our own country who are serving in any way whatever in any of the affected areas, conduct themselves according to the highest ideals of nursing, the importance of the trained woman to society will be demonstrated in such a manner that fuller professional and social recognition will be awarded her than years of peace conditions would bring. Out of this terrible conflict, in which nurses are bearing their full share of the burden, with physicians and soldiers, there may come an acknowledgment of the work, not only of those who are serving now but of those who have labored to bring nursing to its present status.

To all of our associates of every nation who are actively engaged in war relief work, we send greetings for the new year, knowing that with whatever hardships their days may be filled they go to rest with the sense of satisfaction that comes only with the consciousness of duty well performed.

### ENFORCING EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

State registration is regulating many things in the training school that have long needed supervision and improvement but there are still many schools that are deficient in organization and in a well-regulated curriculum. While most schools coming under a state law make an effort to comply with its requirements, there are others that comply

on paper but do not follow these regulations in the carrying out of the daily routine.

In consideration of the young pupil, the girl of eighteen or nineteen, it seems unnecessary to state that such pupils should not serve their probationary period or their first year in certain departments of the hospital. We know that our best organized schools advance their pupils gradually, in such a way that obstetrics and the wards for venereal diseases come toward the end of the course. Who can answer for the consequences of placing an ignorant, undeveloped, untrained girl of less than twenty to serve her probation in an obstetrical ward of a hospital, to be called at night when cases come off, with perhaps only a young house officer in attendance?—consequences not only to the patient but to the finer susceptibilities of the girl.

Inspection of training schools is only in its infancy, it has hardly begun to make an impression upon institutions that regard the law lightly. Yet to such inspection are we to look for the proper organization of such schools and the regulation of such abuses. At the present time the whole nursing world is diverted by war conditions, the needs of the Red Cross and the relief work that is going on in every city and town, but even in the midst of these things our own affairs must not be neglected. In those states where inspection has not been secured, not a year should pass without an effort being made to secure an amendment making such provision and where provision for inspection is inadequate, as is the case, we believe, in all the states where there are many schools, vigorous efforts should be made to provide adequate assistance to make the work more effective. In our opinion this matter of closer supervision and inspection of our training schools is the most important that is before us at the present time. We have made a splendid beginning but it must be carried steadily forward, step by step, as is necessary in all educational movements if advance is to be made.

#### THE QUESTION OF PUNISHMENTS

One of the problems that every training school superintendent finds it difficult to solve is the question of the penalty which shall be attached to the breaking of certain rules and regulations which must be observed for the order and discipline of the school and for the efficiency of service of the hospital. We still cling to the idea that a woman who is old enough to be admitted into a training school should be sufficiently intelligent and conscientious not to need to be punished for mistakes or errors like a child of five years, that if she cannot be reasoned with and does not appreciate the responsibility of the work she has under-

taken and is lacking in proper desire to comply with the regulations and requirements of the school, she has no right to be there. On the other hand we realize that the pupil of today is younger and less mature than the one of even a few years ago, that she has not settled down to the serious affairs of life, as the duties of a nurse require she should, and that she needs closer supervision and more careful guidance and discipline than our ideal student.

The whole theory of punishment is undergoing a change in its application to adults, as well as to children. The idea is no longer retaliation and revenge, but education and reform. To deprive a pupil of her cap for a certain number of weeks, to cut off her recreation hours for one or two or three weeks, are methods so obsolete that it is humiliating to mention them except that we know they are still practised. While the hospital seems to benefit by keeping the pupil at work during recreation hours, in the end it loses because of the inefficiency of the work done by one who is on duty for long hours without rest. If the error of the pupil has been due to thoughtlessness or accident, rather than willful neglect, the result of this punishment is to rouse in her a sense of resentment or injustice rather than to aid her to better work.

To suspend a pupil, keeping her in her room for a short time or sending her home for a longer time, when no substitute is provided in the hospital wards, is really punishing her associates rather than the nurse herself. She may or may not be humiliated, but she is given a rest from her work, which some one carries as an added burden.

We believe that many of the petty lapses of conduct and errors of forgetfulness which make the training of young nurses so difficult could be prevented if the superintendent could take time and would have the courage to have an uninterrupted and heart to heart talk with every pupil admitted to her school, as one woman to another, explaining to her what nursing is, the qualities that are necessary for success, what the school will require of her as a pupil, her responsibilities and relationship to the hospital, to the patients, to the officers, to the servants and to her associates, from the highest to the lowest. An intelligent girl who is started off in this way will have a feeling of loyalty to her superintendent and different sense of responsibility and will be made to realize that if she proves herself unreliable or incompetent her place in the school is forfeited.

We do not believe in punishments in the old-fashioned interpretation of the word. We do believe in appealing to the reasoning powers and good sense of the woman.

## THE PROBLEM OF RECREATION

Pupils who are immature when entering a school should have a closer supervision and a longer period of preliminary instruction than those who are older; they should also have the opportunity and provision for the right kind of relationship with both men and women, so that their natural social instincts may be gratified. The question of allowing free social intercourse between the internes and nurses of our large hospitals is one of constant difficulty and is in many places a still unsettled problem. Under old conditions, when nurses' quarters were in the hospital proper and many times over the wards, without proper reception rooms, all men callers had to be excluded, but at the present time, in our luxurious nurses' homes, with not only one, but many recreation rooms, there is no reason why there should be any discrimination in the matter of men callers. We do feel however, that the young nurse needs the same supervision in the training school in regard to the men from whom she accepts invitations, especially in these days of auto riding, as she would expect to have in a well-regulated home under the care of her parents.

## SENDING OUT PUPILS DURING TRAINING

While we are on this subject of the training school, there is another matter of long-standing which has been discussed and which our national organizations and state registration have largely regulated but which is still practised in some places, that of sending the pupil nurse out on private cases while in training. Even today we hear of superintendents who are really conscientious, who seem not to have grasped the principle involved, which summed up briefly is this:

When a hospital establishes a school for nurses it adds to its function of caring for the sick that of an educational institution. It agrees to give to the pupils entering the school an education in nursing in return for the services performed by them in caring for the hospital patients. If the pupil is constantly, or even occasionally, taken from the wards and sent out for an indefinite time to earn money for the institution, she is not only paying for her training by her labor in the hospital, but she is paying for it a second time by labor performed outside the hospital, during which time she loses that systematic instruction under supervision which the hospital has agreed to give her and for which it is responsible. The nursing body as a whole, and the more enlightened members of the medical profession have decided that such instruction in the hospital is needed to complete her training, and it is an injustice to the pupil that the routine of her training shall be

interrupted in this way and that she should be called upon to meet conditions and responsibilities of private nursing before her training is complete, for the financial betterment of the hospital.

From the very beginning, eighteen years ago, of the American Nurses' Association, one of the conditions for membership by alumnae associations has been that all the training of the pupils must be given in the hospital and more than one association wishing admission has been kept waiting until the trustees of the hospital complied with this requirement.

Some of the state laws allow schools giving a three years' course to send their pupils out of the hospital for a period of not longer than three months during the last year of their training, but even in these states the schools of the highest order realize the importance to the pupil of every day spent in the hospital and do not avail themselves of this privilege.

#### THE PLACE OF THE PRACTICAL NURSE

There are still in active work in the nursing organizations over the country great numbers of women who will remember that during the pioneer period of organization the feeling predominated that membership must be restricted to only those nurses of high qualifications, both in professional training and in moral integrity. In the League of Nursing Education, which was organized under the name of The American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, for many years only women engaged in active executive or teaching work were admitted as members. Assistant superintendents came in only as associates and those in lesser positions were permitted to attend meetings but could not become members even as associates. So with the American Nurses' Association, although lines were drawn much more rigidly than at the present time, in the broader development there has never been any letting down of the educational or professional standards.

But we see in some places a tendency to let the pendulum swing too far the other way and we hear of groups of registered nurses admitting untrained women not only to membership in their registries but to associate membership in their local associations, until such untrained women have become a dominating factor in both. We believe in a broad policy in the administration of the affairs of our organizations, national and local, but we do not believe in letting down the bars absolutely and sweeping aside the distinctions which have been established at such great cost. Because of the maintenance of such standards there has been carried forward the great variety of

nursing projects which are the result of organization effort, national and local: our course at Teachers College, central registries, public health nursing, army, navy and Red Cross nursing, the Robb Fund, the Relief Fund and state registration with its compelling influence over the training school.

We appreciate the fact that there is a great demand that practical nurses shall be controlled and that there is a growing belief that by bringing them into association with graduates in central registries they will be willing to accept the position of subordinates in nursing affairs and that by so doing the public will be better served and the registries become more popular, also that the fees which such nurses pay are an aid in maintaining the registries.

Theoretically we are in sympathy with this idea but that is a very different matter from admitting practical nurses to our organization life and of giving them any voice in the management of our central directories or of our local organizations. Those who are so short sighted as to give them this kind of recognition and who think there are advantages to be gained by the affiliation in our organizations of this class of workers show a lack of experience which teaches the valuable lesson that it is much easier to keep out of difficulties than it is to get out.

#### THE RELIEF FUND CALENDAR

We understand that many nurses have responded so generously to the needs of the Red Cross and of the various war relief funds that they cannot buy the Relief Fund calendars as they have done in past years and there is danger that a large number will remain on hand unsold.

We want to give a word of warning to those whose generous impulses are running away with them and to remind them that as a result of the generous attitude of this country toward Europe there must come a period of great privation and suffering here. It is said that in sending such large quantities of grain abroad not enough is being retained to use as seed for the crops of the coming year. In all of our great cities thousands of men and women are idle or are working on short time in consequence of the reactionary effect of conditions abroad upon our industries. We may be quite sure that some of our own women who are giving of their strength to nurse the soldiers abroad will return incapacitated for further work, and we shall then have need for every penny that can be contributed to the Relief Fund. The price of the calendar was reduced to twenty-five cents on January first and every nurse who has not provided herself with one should do so and thus help build up the fund which is to be of such great value later to those in need.

## WAR NEWS

We give our readers in this issue of the JOURNAL two very interesting reports of war conditions abroad and regret that we cannot promise a series of such articles. Owing to the attitude of neutrality which our country has assumed it is impossible for our nurses who are abroad to write in detail of their work. *The British Journal of Nursing* is under no such restrictions and those who wish to follow in detail nursing work at the front will find in its pages fresh and full reports from the English nurses who are serving in various places. Its office is at 431 Oxford Street, London, W.

## A NEW COURSE IN SCHOOL NURSING

The official announcement in our news columns of a special course in school nursing at Teachers College will interest many nurses who are seeking the best way to prepare themselves for this work. The new note which is struck in the announcement is that of provision for the teaching of normal diagnosis. While nurses become familiar with many manifestations of disease during their hospital courses, they do not always know as well the manifestations of health or the early deviations from the normal to be seen in the incipient stages of many childish ailments. This will add to the value of the course.

## THE JANUARY MEETINGS

During the third week in January, as is usual, committee meetings will be held in New York City of the Executive Committee of the American Nurses' Association, of the JOURNAL directors, the Robb Committee and probably of many others closely associated with these. All matters of business to be presented at these meetings should be placed in the hands of the proper officials before that time.